

# PRESS RELEASE

## House Armed Services Committee Duncan Hunter, Chairman

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### OPENING REMARKS OF CHAIRMAN DUNCAN HUNTER

#### *Full Committee Hearing on Iraq Operations and Policy*

It's been six months since coalition forces crossed the Iraqi border and began combat operations to depose Saddam Hussein. It took three weeks for our military to reach Baghdad and topple the regime, and then a few more days to conclude major combat operations.

But that didn't end the war, which shouldn't surprise us. After all, Hussein and his cronies ruled through terror. They have nothing to gain—and everything to lose—from a peaceful, stable, and democratic Iraq. So, regime die-hards, criminals, and foreign fighters attack coalition forces in the forlorn hope that they can drive us out, that they can retrieve power through terror against our military, against the United Nations, and against defenseless Iraqi civilians.

Instead of a strategy, they have terror. It's not going to beat us on the battlefield, which they know they can't do. Instead, our enemies are using terror to create the perception that Iraq is chaotic and ungovernable in the hope that we will lose heart and cut our commitment before the job is done. If the combination of pro-Saddam die-hards, criminals, and foreign jihadists succeed in their aims, we will leave prematurely and Iraqi democracy will die before the people of Iraq are ready and able to defend it.

That is what's at stake in Iraq today; whether our staying power is stronger than that of the terrorists. For the sake of our security, it must be.

Our military is up to the task. We have taken losses. They're particularly painful because these soldiers are the best America has to offer. But everyone over there—civilian or military—is now serving on the front lines in the battle between terror and civilization. That is as noble a responsibility as the fights against fascism and communism were in the last century.

There are some who would pass that responsibility off onto the United Nations or who criticize the coalition mission in Iraq because it hasn't unfolded as neatly as a Hollywood screenplay. But those critics rarely offer plans for winning the war on terror that go much beyond asking someone else to bear the burden.

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They're missing the point.

Iraq isn't like the peacekeeping or stability operations of the 1990s. There, the United States sought to keep warring parties apart. We tried to be fair and impartial. In theory, if not practice, other states and the UN could also play that role.

In Iraq, the stakes are much, much higher. Regime holdouts and foreign jihadists aren't flocking to Iraq to defend its people; they're flocking to Iraq to kill Americans and restore a terrorist regime. The forces of terror are genuine enemies of the United States and all that we value. That makes this a war in which we are active participants, not a peacekeeping exercise in which American resources are interchangeable with those of the United Nations.

Because our security depends on victory, we cannot entrust either to the dictates of others. We can, should, and do welcome allies in the fight against terror. Indeed, some 32 nations have committed military resources to building a secure, stable, and viable democracy in Iraq. Their contributions are important and more allies will be welcome. Nevertheless, our security demands that we prevail, with or without them.

We're at war with terror. It's a war the terrorists started, but it's a war we must finish on our terms.

As the President noted before the United Nations just two days ago, peace comes from freedom, and we secure that freedom with courage. We have years of hard work before us in Iraq; we need to demonstrate the courage to do it.

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